



SUBIC BAY, Philippines (June 6, 2016) U.S. Navy Lt. Derek Chamberlain bonds with a resident of the Olongapo Social Development Center during a Project Handclasp outreach program during Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Philippines 2016. CARAT is a series of annual maritime exercises between the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps and the armed forces of nine partner nations to include Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Timor-Leste. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Joshua Fulton/Released)

MY PACIFIC TOUR: A PLANNER'S PERSPECTIVE ON GLOBAL HEALTH ENGAGEMENT

By Lt. Derek J. Chamberlain, MSC

Throughout my career, I have been told, “jobs will find you.” Just let things play out, my mentors have insisted, and you will find your niche.

As a millennial, this advice can strike fear straight through you. We are the “checklist” generation, and testing different waters can cause some trepidation. Still, I carried this advice with me as I left the Naval Health Clinic Cherry Point in April 2014. I ended up at a place I had not heard of before: Marine Corps Forces, Pacific (MARFORPAC) at Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii. Moving from a small clinic in North Carolina to a component headquarters billet in the vast Pacific area of operations (AOR) was not the most ideal transition for a one-year lieutenant, but I was up for the challenge.

A few weeks into the new job, I found myself packing my bags and working my first health theater security cooperation job in the Philippines. It was then that I had my first experience with Global Health Engagement (GHE).

Through GHE, the U.S. Navy collaborates with partner nations to build trust, share information, coordinate mutual actions and achieve interoperability in health-related activities that support U.S. interests. Not all GHE looks the same, but it always benefits both the United States and our partners. It strengthens the health systems of our allies, and keeps our forces and our nation safe.

As soon I completed that first planning evolution in the Philippines, I was hooked on GHE. The pace, the pressure, and the endless list of things to do kept me constantly stimulated, and my passion for the work continued to grow.

My time at MARFORPAC was challenging, but I strongly believe we can all adapt and overcome situations that may seem insurmountable. For this reason, I write to reflect on my achievements, lessons learned, and overall perspective on GHE in the Pacific.

Every country does business differently. I experienced the different cultures, political landscapes, and ideologies of various countries during my three years – and portions of over 600 days voluntarily served forward – in the Pacific AOR. I witnessed firsthand how critical it is to remember that each country operates differently.

In GHE, it is critical to work with local systems of control, even if they operate in a way that is unfamiliar. It is also where diplomatic foresight outweighs tactful pressure.



160606-N-OU129-138 SUBIC BAY, Philippines (June 6, 2016) U.S. Navy Lt. Derek Chamberlain and residents of the Olongapo Social Development Center share a light moment during a Project Handclasp outreach program during Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Philippines 2016. CARAT is a series of annual maritime exercises between the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps and the armed forces of nine partner nations to include Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Timor-Leste. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Joshua Fulton/Released)

Know the funding streams and how they work. I will be very forward in how I say this: no one is going to show up at your office with a pot of money and ask you to go and fulfill your bilateral country

objectives. It just doesn't work that way. When I arrived at MARFORPAC, Lt. Cmdr. Dave Queen and I shared a small budget for health security cooperation engagements for an entire year.

After our first couple months at MARFORPAC, we decided to dig in and go chase our own funding to fulfill our countries' requests to build their capacity, and two years later, we had successfully tapped into various funding streams. Why is this important? I stress this to everyone I meet that gets to hear me ramble about security cooperation: capacity is nothing without sustainability. The days of a one-off exercise resulting in small capability and little to no sustainability are over. Garnering our own funds to achieve the desired country end-state gave us the flexibility to develop and refine those capabilities, thus enhancing their sustainment.

Manage expectations. Engagements are built on trust, and you might potentially create setbacks for yourself if you fail to deliver on your commitments.

Your bilateral discussions should never be U.S.-led. The partner nation should be empowered to clearly define their needs before we assess how our GHE teams can be of assistance. An Air Force International Health Specialist colleague once told me we need to open a dialogue where the U.S. can "listen rather than talk." This approach puts the partner nation at ease in order to facilitate cooperation, and encourages them to be frank about their requirements.

Stay engaged! A mentor of mine uses this phrase all the time, and it is a simple, but powerful, statement in the global health arena. Constant collaboration, communication and presence must occur; security cooperation does not happen from your desk, but from being forward and present with your counterparts. Shake as many hands as you can and *never, ever, burn a bridge*.

My time in the Pacific recently came to an end. There were times of growth, enormous amounts of stress, and then there were the times when I saw hard work come to fruition. I have a photo of me with a three-year-old girl from the Olongapo City Orphanage in the Philippines, taken during a community relations event we coordinated with the city. These are the moments that will keep you coming back to GHE. It's not the programs and it's not the policies you helped put it place. It always comes down to the people, and knowing you may have played a small part in the development of their lives.

Lt. Derek Chamberlain, a Medical Service Corps Officer in the U.S. Navy, currently works in the Office of the Joint Staff Surgeon in Washington, D.C. This article speaks to his professional experience with Global Health Engagement, and his lessons learned while serving at Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii.

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